

8, Warrford Court, London,
E.C.

29th. August 1861.

My dear old friend, It is long, very long, since I wrote to you, but often, indeed, do I think of you, & dear Mrs Gray, with feelings as affectionate as you, yourself, could desire - The plain, simple, fact is this - I am quite out of the world, excepting so far as my daily duties are concerned & that you may judge how literally this is true, I will tell you that I have not made a single visit, not even to a member of my late dear wife's numerous family, since I lost her - nearly 5 years ago! I have not even seen our dear Boott, who was my close neighbour, when I had a happy home - for the simple reason that I could not pluck up heart to call upon him -

Last week, however, I did so, for the first time - but found that he was at Harrogate, & learnt, to my great sorrow, that he left London very poorly - I wrote to him, immediately, & have his reply this morning, from which I extract, as follows,

"I am as you say of yourself, "So, So" - my digestion is sadly enfeebled - & for months my head has been so out of order, that I have not been able to use it. I came here merely to keep my old friend Sir Wm Hooker company, but have staid to enjoy the fresh air. He left us a fortnight ago, quite restored. I have not tried the waters. I shall be in town in about 10 days" - He also sent me your "scolding letter" of 10 Inst. for perusal, & which is now before me -

It is this letter then, my dear Gray, tho' I have no intention of offering a remark upon it, which has induced me to write to you, only that I might have the pleasure of assuring you that my deep & earnest sympathy is with you all - My first

and last desire for the happiness of the land, where I resided for so many years of my life, & where, amongst many cherished recollections, I call to mind our friendly intercourse extending over much of the period -

I have said that I never visit, & you will therefore at once understand that I am but poor authority for what is called "public opinion" but I do hear very much said as to American affairs, by the hundreds who daily frequent our Exchange - Bank &c. (exactly analogous to what you would call "Wall-Street-folks") amongst this (my) class therefore, I have no hesitation in saying that there was a general feeling of regret at the breaking out of your unhappy war - & I believe that such was very much the temper of the whole Country - If there is now a more indifferent feeling as to the struggle in which you are engaged, I think it is attributable - first - to the Slavery Question - You know (this perhaps not to the extent to which it exists) the absolute abhorrence with which Slavery, in any form, is viewed by our people - & the very first thought, in the minds of all - was that this accursed institution would be at once destroyed - This illusion was ~~at once~~ dispelled by the Missives of the President, & Speeches in Congress &c. and all are now convinced that it is not a war waged for the cause of humanity, & emancipation of the Slave, but merely for political supremacy, for which, as between the North & the South, our people care nothing whatever - I do firmly believe that had it been otherwise, England would have regarded it as a Holy War - & the heartfelt sympathy (I purse, if needful) of the nation, would have been yours - whatever our rulers might say or intend - Instead of this, however, one of the Northern Generals, made of fugitive negroes as "articles contraband of war" - & the President constantly recognizes the rights of their masters - not being Rebels. Indeed, it is fully believed here, that if the Northern forces should be successful, their first acts of magnanimity, towards the conciliation of their vanquished foe, would be the passage of fugitive Slave laws - & what more, whereby the fetters of the Slave might be more securely rivetted - Thus the affectionate sympathies of our people, disappointed in their first (perhaps unreasonable) expectations, are not with you in your struggle, but I believe they are merely passive, without any adverse feeling -

Then come the politicians - who dislike the North. tariff, of course & tell us that since no principle, for which our people care, is involved, in the struggle - the good wishes of the Nation should be with the South, as our best customers, & growers of cotton &c. &c. Do this they add the foolish vapouring & bravado of some of your papers, as to the "taking Canada &c" -

Lastly, come the manufacturing Interest - very powerful with us, as with you, & these look only at the question commercially, & their conclusions ally them with the politicians -

Neither of these classes could or would have been heard, had not the great heart of the nation been chilled in their hopes as to the abolition of slavery - Just as in the case of Europe, at the present moment. The politicians say that it is for the interest of England that Austria should be united to Prussia &c, but the warm sympathies of her people are with Italy & Hungary, & no minister would dare to ignore the fact -

Thus then, my dear Gray, I have endeavoured to set before you what I believe is, in the main, the present feeling of this Country, as to your fearful ~~war~~ - Our people are not indifferent as to the great calamity of the war - but, they look on - feeling that they are only commercially interested in the result; & with little preference as to the combatants - For myself, I say nothing - I quite understand the position taken by the President - & so long as he requires from the South, that allegiance which under the Constitution they are bound to give to the Union, it is quite clear that he must extend to them the rights & privileges to which they are, on their side, equally entitled - I see the difficulties of the position - & grieve that Slavery should be - as it certainly is - recognized by the Constitution of the U. S. - I should earnestly desire that one result of this struggle should be the real freedom & inviolability of the Northern Soil, but this can never be, I fear - whether the States are divided, or re-united - In the first case, I should anticipate perpetual border-warfare, in the efforts of the Slave-holders to recapture their rear - a. w. s. & the re-union would, I suppose, leave the Slavery question much as it stands - However it may be settled - if settled it can be - I earnestly hope that the happiness & prosperity of the entire land (without further compromising the unhappy African Race) will be the final result -

I have written thus much, because the subject is of deep & anxious interest - not because my remarks can give you any new views on the matter.

And now, my dear friend, of other & more pleasing topics - First of my two little Carlins - The eldest - Arnette - (7 yrs. old in Dec. 2) is a sweet, lively little brunette with eyes very nearly black. The second - Herbert - will be 5 yrs. old, next month. He is very fair, with curly hair & grey eyes - a gentle, timid child, but also very lively. Their (developments both mental & bodily) are all that even I could desire, over-anxious as I am. They are under the loving & most watchful care of an elder sister of my poor wife. I have never known the want of a mother's love. To secure this inestimable benefit for them - I have continued a resident with my father-in-law & partner, at Blackheath, about 6 miles from town. You will quite understand that I have not the comforts which a home of my own would suppose, but I am treated with much kindness, & have many reasons for thankfulness. My health & strength are not what they were - but it is my spirits more especially, that have given way. At times, I feel as tho' I knew not how to go on with my business - but generally speaking, I continue to rub on, from Day to Day.

Of Botany I can say nothing - nor have I seen my poor Cabinet since the breaking-up of my "happy home", nearly 5-years ago! until last week - when I saw them, covered with dust at the University College, where dear Booth has given them house-room. When I looked at them, & remembered the anxious care & labour of years which I devoted to them, I could not help feeling that it was a forcible comment on the vanity of human life & its pursuits!

I see Dr. Prior (late Alexander) now & then, as he calls at my Counting House, tho' I never visit him. He always speaks kindly of you & dear Fanny. I must our dear old friend & the dear girls are all well - give my kindest & most affec.^e regards to them when you see or write to them.

One word, only, in addition - Say to your dear wife, that I remember her & her great kindness to me with unvarying pleasure. & I pray God to bless & preserve you both, thro' this anxious & exciting crisis of your land.

Always, my dear boy, Yr affc. Gacey

I have written this letter at my Co. House, in haste, & amidst interruptions, but as I have not time to read it over - you must supply deficiencies